



Wapato Lake Land Protection Planning Study

Planning Update 4, December 2003

Greetings

This is the fourth Planning Update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, designed to inform and involve you in the planning process for the Wapato Lake Land Protection Planning Study in Washington and Yamhill counties. The planning updates notify you of opportunities to become directly involved in the planning process as development of the environmental compliance document, Land Protection Plan, and Conceptual Management Plan progresses. Your input is very important, it helps in gathering information and identifying issues affecting you, your community, and the natural resources of the Wapato Lake area.



*Wapato Lake was named after the wapato plant, also known as the tule potato.
Photo USFWS.*

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Wapato Lake historically supported large numbers of migrating and wintering waterfowl including tundra swans.

Photo USFWS.



What is the Status of the Study?

Research and mapping needed to develop the preliminary alternatives have been ongoing. Gathering and thoroughly reviewing information collected from local jurisdictions to develop preliminary alternatives is now complete. The next step in the planning process is for you to review and provide comments on the preliminary alternatives. The alternatives may be revised in the planning documents to reflect your comments.

What are the Preliminary Alternatives?

Five preliminary alternatives, including a no-action alternative, are described on page 2. Under the four action alternatives (alternatives B, C, D, and E), a National Wildlife Refuge would be proposed. The action alternatives differ in the acreage and distribution of the land that could be acquired in fee title or conservation agreement, or managed under agreement by the Service. The alternatives' boundaries generally follow parcel lines. Not all lands in the study area were included in the alternatives. For example, most homes were excluded from the alternatives. Some of the criteria used to determine which lands to include within a preliminary alternative follows:

- Could the area be restored to wetlands or other important habitats?
- What are the soil types, historic and existing vegetation, 100-year floodplain, elevation, etc.?
- Does the area contain rare native plant communities?
- Would the area link to existing wildlife habitat?
- What are the existing land uses and development?
- What is the potential to enhance habitat for anadromous fish?
- What are the existing water rights and associated water delivery costs?

Alternative A is the no action alternative which means the Service would not initiate a Wapato Lake land protection program. Alternative B includes the historic Wapato Lake bed only. Alternative C includes the lake bed plus portions of Wapato and Ayers creeks. Alternative D includes the lake bed, portions of the creeks, and the area north of Gaston Road between Highway 47 and Springhill Road to their intersection. Alternative E includes the entire study area less a few parcels of developed land. Maps of the alternatives are on pages 3 thru 6.

The Preliminary Alternatives

Please note that the acreages provided in this planning update were generated using geographic data layers of varying accuracies. Therefore, the data presented is for general planning purposes only.

Alternative A is the no action alternative. A new national wildlife refuge would not be proposed. Future protection or development within wildlife habitats would be managed through existing land-use regulatory controls administered by local agencies, Washington and Yamhill counties, the State of Oregon, and Federal agencies.

Alternative B encompasses approximately 1,960 acres. Alternative B is a contiguous block of habitat including the historic Wapato Lake bed, as well as areas outside the historic lake bed and out of the 100-year floodplain. This alternative includes most parcels of land bounded on the north by Gaston Road, west to Highway 47, south to Flett Road, and east to Springhill Road. It is the smallest of the alternatives and is the minimum land area manageable for refuge purposes. Wapato Lake historically supported large numbers of migrating and wintering waterfowl including tundra swans. Wapato Lake derives its name from the wapato, an aquatic plant with potato-like tubers that waterfowl and other wildlife use for food. Restoring this area would likely attract thousands of waterfowl as well as other wildlife to the area. This wildlife refuge may provide opportunity for priority public uses of the refuge system including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. In addition, a restored Lake would enhance aquatic habitats of anadromous fish such as steelhead. This alternative also includes upland habitats that would support mammals such as black-tailed deer and both resident and migratory songbirds.

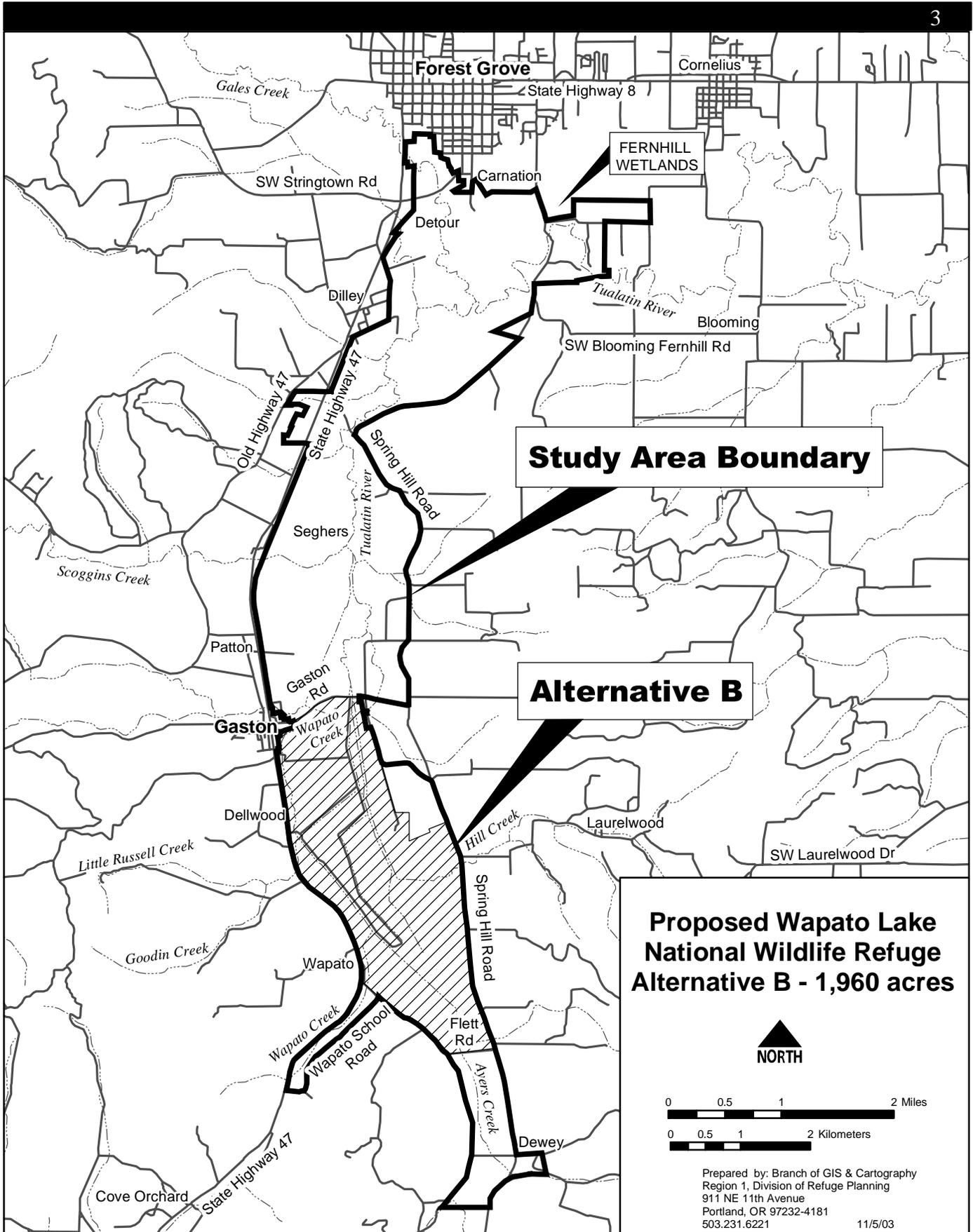
How Do I Provide Comments?

Your comments are needed on the Preliminary Alternatives. Please send comments by January 30, 2004, to Cathy Osugi, at the address, fax number, or e-mail address listed on page 8.

Alternative C encompasses approximately 2,430 acres including all land in Alternative B plus Wapato Creek west of Flett Road between Highway 47 and Wapato School Road, and Ayers Creek from Flett Road south about 1.4 miles. Including the lands along Wapato and Ayers creeks could improve the water quality entering Wapato Lake and protect additional valuable habitat. Riparian areas along the creeks would support fish, and provide habitat for numerous songbirds such as willow flycatcher and American robin.

Alternative D encompasses approximately 4,310 acres including all land in Alternative C plus the lands north of Gaston Road between Highway 47 and Springhill Road to their intersection. The additional lands in this alternative include intact riparian habitat along Tualatin River and existing wetlands. These areas currently support various wildlife including songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors such as red-tailed hawks. This area would also be suitable for restoration of a variety of native habitat types. Historically, this area supported riparian forest, emergent and forested wetland, and upland prairie habitats. Alternative D, with habitat restoration, would provide important habitat for resident and migratory fish and wildlife.

Alternative E encompasses approximately 6,280 acres including all land in Alternative D plus the lands north of Springhill Road to the southern city limits of Forest Grove. As the largest area of consideration, this alternative includes most lands within the study area. Much of the land in the northeast portion of this alternative is currently owned by METRO and Clean Water Services. These agencies may embark on restoration projects complementary to Service efforts, therefore, the potential exists for reducing overall costs of restoration. Restoring this area could provide connectivity to habitats located in Fernhill Wetlands, Gales Creek, and downstream areas of Tualatin River. Much of this area was riparian forest according to historic records and would support a multitude of fish and wildlife species.



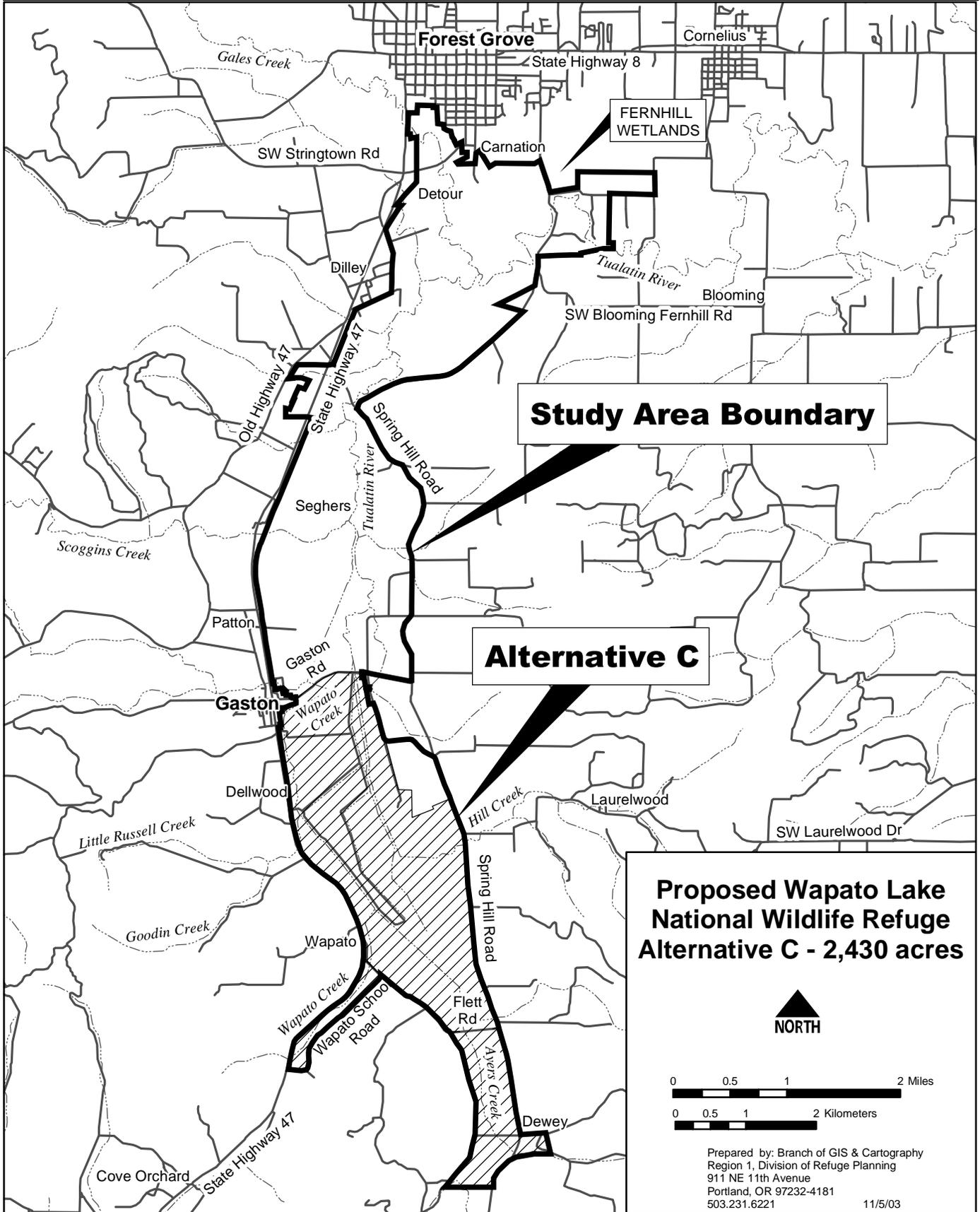
Study Area Boundary

Alternative B

Proposed Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge Alternative B - 1,960 acres



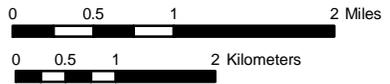
Prepared by: Branch of GIS & Cartography
 Region 1, Division of Refuge Planning
 911 NE 11th Avenue
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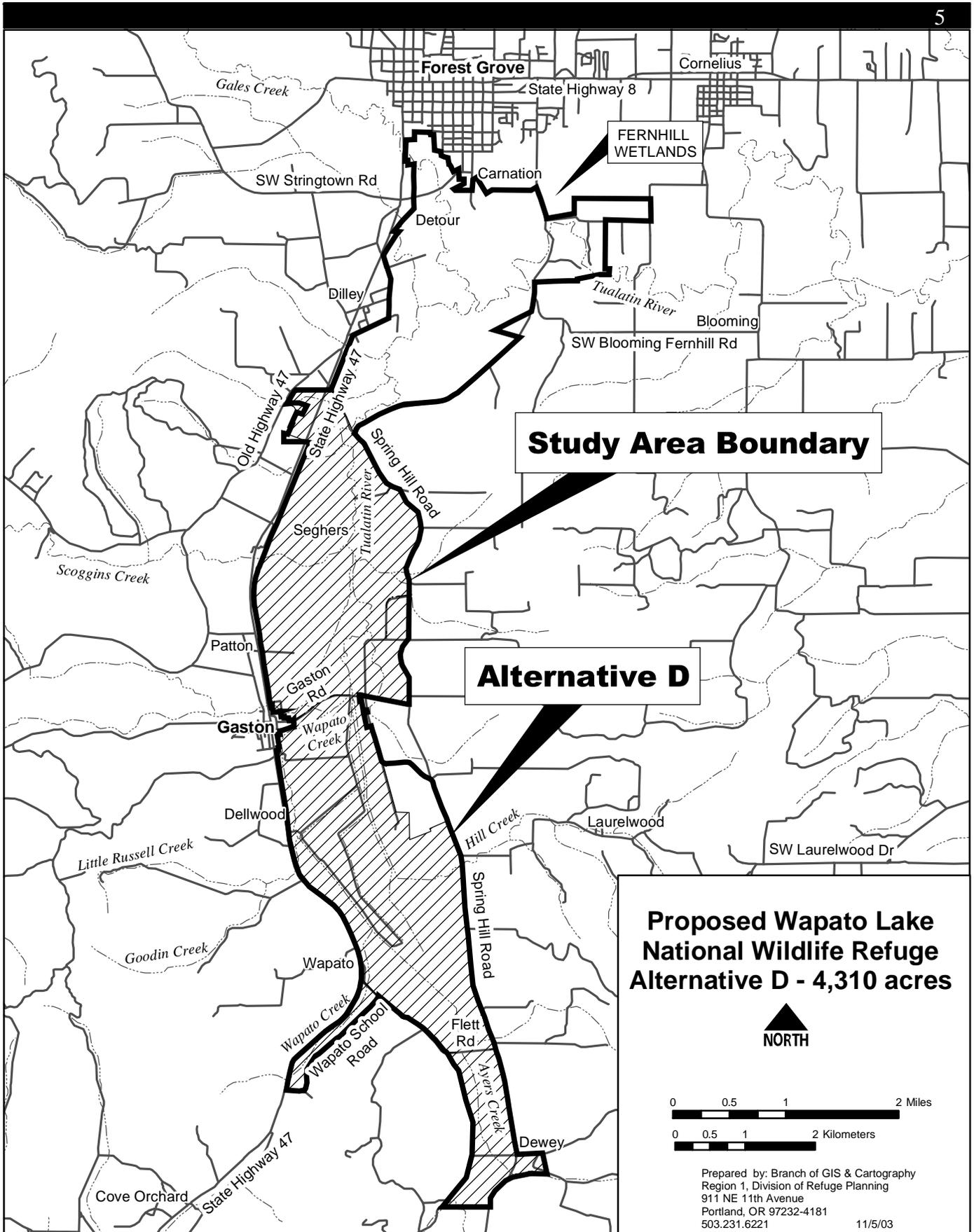
Study Area Boundary

Alternative C

Proposed Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge Alternative C - 2,430 acres



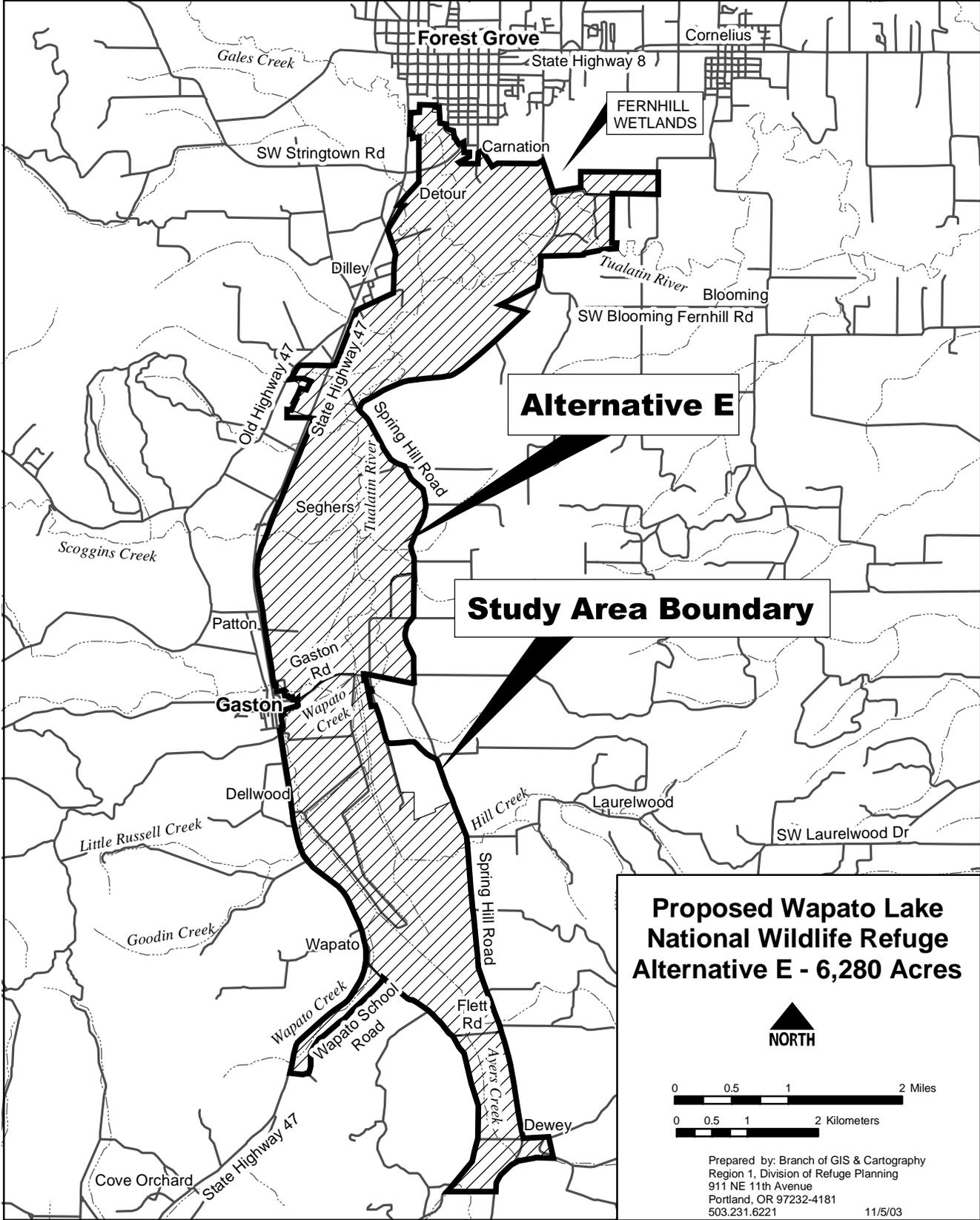
Prepared by: Branch of GIS & Cartography
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Proposed Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge Alternative D - 4,310 acres



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Alternative E

Study Area Boundary

Proposed Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge Alternative E - 6,280 Acres



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

Prepared by: Branch of GIS & Cartography
Region 1, Division of Refuge Planning
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232-4181
503.231.6221 11/5/03

What Does the Study Mean to Landowners?

If it is determined through the land protection study and public involvement process that the fish and wildlife resources in the Wapato Lake area should be protected by creating a new national wildlife refuge and a refuge boundary is established, interested landowners within the boundary who are willing sellers may have an opportunity to sell their property or grant easements to the Service. Landowners within a refuge boundary are not obligated to sell their property to the Service and private property rights are not affected by being within a refuge boundary. Landowners within a refuge boundary retain all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of private land ownership including the rights to access, control trespass, sell to any party, and develop their properties, even if the Service owns or manages the land adjacent to them. Land development continues to be subject to State and local regulations and land use zoning. Private lands remain in the control of the owner unless sold to the Service. Service land management and access is limited to land the Service has acquired in fee title or conservation easement, or manages under agreement.

What Happens Next?

A schedule of the key planning steps follows. Unforeseen circumstances could cause schedule changes. We will keep you posted of major changes in planning dates. Public comment period dates will be announced when documents are distributed for review and comment.

Actions Completed:

Project Kickoff/Planning Update 1 Issued.....	October 2001
1st Open House, Gaston, Oregon.....	November 7, 2001
2nd Open House.....	December 5, 2001
Planning Update 2 Issued-Summarizing Public Comments	April 2002
Planning Update 3 Issued	December 2002
Research and Mapping Completed.....	August 2003
Planning Update 4 Issued-Announcing Preliminary Alternatives.....	December 2003

Actions Remaining:

Public Comments Due on the Preliminary Alternatives.....	January 30, 2004
Review Public Comments and Develop Draft Documents.....	March 2004
Draft Documents Released and Public Comment Period Begins....	April 2004
Public Meeting/Open House.....	May 2004
Public Comment Period Ends.....	June 2004
Final Documents and Notice of Decision Released.....	August 2004

Who Do I Contact?



USE OUR E-MAIL OR WEBSITE

E-mail Comments to:

FW1PlanningComments @r1.fws.gov

(Please use "Wapato Lake" in the subject.)

Refuge Planning Web site:
<http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>

For Information on the National Wildlife Refuge System, contact:

Ralph Webber, Project Leader or
Christopher Lapp, Deputy Project Leader
Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge
16507 SW Roy Rogers Road
Sherwood, Oregon 97140
Phone: (503) 590-5811 Fax: (503) 590-6702

Send Comments To or Obtain Planning Information From:

Cathy Osugi, Wildlife Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Refuge Planning (NWRS/RPL)
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181
Phone: (503) 231-2231 or toll free (877) 312-1751 Fax: (503) 231-6161

For Information on Land Acquisition Contact:

Wendy Castineira, Senior Realty Specialist
Division of Realty
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181
Phone: (503) 231-2039 or toll free (800) 662-8933 Fax: (503) 231-6161



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish & Wildlife Service
Attn: NWRS/RPL
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181

Address correction requested



Great blue heron, Jean Harrison, USFWS

In this issue: Review the Wapato Lake Land Protection Planning alternatives, maps, and the revised planning schedule.